

Sacred and Secular

Part II

The differences between the sacred and secular can sometimes be seen in their view of the world and the various concerns that arise around the globe. The secularist reacts negatively to religious people who at times display a kind of distorted religious faith that neglects these vital concerns. Often, those who regard the sacred have what might be called a “reservation mentality” where they isolate themselves from the pain and struggles of the world. They are seen as having “dropped out”, preferring to look to the future world alone. They are rightfully charged with a spurious spirituality that gives license for neglecting this world.

However, those who are truly concerned about the sacred know that there is profound concern for this world. Christians believe this world was the site and purpose of the incarnation. The Jewish community believes God has spoken and directed them to look for a Messiah who would come to this world. American Indian, Muslim, Buddhist, and many others also believe their God has directed attention to them and to this world. For Christians, there is no other theatre of God’s redemptive action than this world. This makes it clear that in some way we are all called to be secular people.

The focus of the sacred is in the belief that there is a future life beyond this one. A life beyond death is the hope of those who profess a belief in the sacred and they live their lives to attain it. But it is also true that those who claim a belief in the sacred have a responsibility in the world. If this world is the focus of God’s redemptive work, than we, people who live in the world, are the focus of that work. That makes those who believe in the sacred responsible for carrying the message to the world knowing God’s grace will direct their steps.